



## Curiosity Building In The Great Outdoors

Young children are naturally curious and enjoy exploring the world around them. They find countless things to observe, investigate, and wonder about. Why does a spider spin a web? Do birds have ears? How do fish breathe?

As parents you can foster your child's natural curiosity through family outings. Even simple, short, inexpensive excursions will pique your child's interest in the natural world. For example, you could go to a park, pond, vegetable garden, nature center, science museum, zoo, fossil-laden hill, or beaver dam.

Kids love to play outside! Let's face it, we all enjoy a breath of fresh air or change of scenery that the outdoor environment provides. It's a relaxing, stress-reducing, tension-relieving part of the day, and a time when much development and learning can take place for your child. Think back to your own childhood. Some of your fondest memories are probably of outdoor activities and places.

Children learn through their senses, and the outdoor play environment is a sensory wonderland. Your child can see insects and clouds, smell flowers and the rain, hear car horns and birds chirping, touch the bark of a tree or a fuzzy caterpillar, and taste



### Children learn through their senses.

a freshly picked berry or sugar snap pea.

In addition, children learn scientific concepts through real experiences such as playing in the mud, holding a rabbit, walking in the rain, jumping into leaves, and playing with worms. For young children, science is a natural and spontaneous process — and sometimes a messy one! But exploring the physical world around your home or neighborhood can enhance your child's understanding of science.

Moreover, by promoting nature education, you give your child a gift of a faithful, lifelong friend; provide life-changing, shaping memories; foster self-regulation and learning; and help develop cognitive, social, and emotional skills and the understanding of oneself. As you can see, a child's personal interaction with diverse natural settings is vitally important.

From time to time, pack a picnic lunch and make a day of it. Be sure to take along a couple of containers (at least one with holes in it) so that you and your child can collect specimens. An inexpensive magnifying glass is also a valuable field accessory. And don't forget paper and pencils.

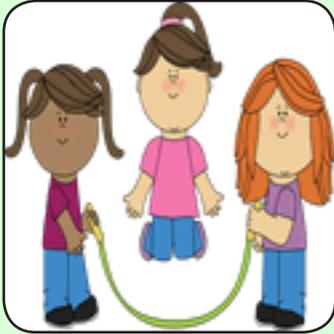
Talk about what you see. Your child might like to draw some observations. Encourage questions by writing them down in a notebook for further investigation. Most of us find that we don't know the answers to all of our kid's questions, and it is fun to research them together. Your child's curiosity and spirit of investigation thrive when you are a fellow scientist, wondering about things and checking them out together.

### Try these activities with your child:

- Fly a kite or watch a tree blow in the wind.
- Build a simple structure from tree branches or recyclables.
- Stargaze and learn about constellations and galaxies.
- Observe the activities of insects and worms.
- Feed birds and ducks.
- Build trenches with sand and water, and dams with sticks and stones.
- Walk outside in the sunshine, rain, and wind.
- Plant a garden.
- Ride bikes together and pay attention to the scenery.

# PERSONAL PARENTING

## MOVE IT!



Ask your child these questions and try doing these activities together.

- How many times can you jump up and down?
- Can you move two body parts at one time?
- Can you clap your hands to a rhythm?

- Try marching or jogging in place.
- Reach up as high as you can.

*How many moving words can YOU think of?*

(run, climb, hike, bike, sprint, wave, kick, stomp, bend)

## Sticky Collage

Children love collage work, and this is twice the fun because it can be changed and added to time and time again.

Place contact paper, sticky side up, on a piece of cardboard by stapling or taping around the edges. Let children select from a variety of collage materials that will stick to the paper. Interesting collages can be made from cotton balls, paper clips, sequins, pipe cleaners, and buttons. It's easy to make a nature collage by collecting things such as pine needles and flower petals.

## Summer Fun at the Pool

Swimming is a great physical activity, and children love to go to pools.

**Follow these tips for summer safety.**

- Keep your eyes on your children every minute, even if a lifeguard is on duty.
- Sign your kids up for lessons—it's a wise investment.
- Instruct children to never swim alone.



## OBSERVING PLAY

Children learn through play, and parents can learn so much about their children when they take the time to observe and listen. Watch what goes on between children on a playground to better assess their growing social skills. Or take a few minutes to observe your child during solo play. Is she adding two blocks to three blocks to make a road longer? Is he using some new words you didn't hear yesterday? You might be surprised by what you learn!

## Batch of Bubbles

### Bubble Recipe

- 1 cup water
- 2 Tbsp. liquid detergent
- 1 Tbsp. glycerin
- ½ tsp. sugar

### Blowing Bubbles with Wands

There are many bubble recipes, but this one makes strong bubbles that last a long time. Mix the ingredients together in a small plastic bowl. Wands can be made from all sorts of things, from pipe cleaners to toilet paper tubes.

### Bubble Art

Color the solution by placing a few drops of food coloring into cups with the bubble mixture, so children have a variety of colors to choose from. Let them blow gently until the bubble mixture is just about to overflow, then take a sheet of white paper and press it lightly on top of the bubbles. Carefully lift the paper off. As the bubbles break, they make a beautiful design.





# Parent Power

We don't get to practice parenthood. We're "all in" right from the beginning, and it's often very different from what we may have read or learned in a parenting class, or even observed when watching other people's kids.

## Meeting the Challenge

Parents don't earn certificates or collect awards at the culmination of a particularly challenging time. You can't quit the job, and you earn no money. The hours are forever, and the job description includes everything from a maid and a chauffeur to a therapist and a chef.

No matter how much we might want to enter the parenting journey with all of the right answers and techniques, that isn't reality. We will find some things that work beautifully. But just when that happens, we usually find ourselves dealing with a brand-new developmental stage. Infants have different needs than toddlers or school agers, and that changes everything. And if you have more than one child, you know that kids are different. They have different personalities, and the parenting technique that worked well with one child won't necessarily work with another.

With all of these things in mind, most of us understand that parents wield a lot of power. We are our child's first teacher. We model everything from language to how to handle anger and disappointment. We set the limits on what is acceptable behavior and what is not. We instill family values and attitudes through actions, words, books read, and television programs watched.



### *Find Support*

When you don't have extended family living nearby, it becomes more important for parents to seek out a support system. Neighbors and friends, blogs, pediatricians, and parenting workshops help tremendously when you need advice or camaraderie.

### *Take Time for Yourself*

Put yourself on the calendar every day. When kids are young, free time is scarce, but there are moments for a bath, a glance through a magazine, or work on a favorite do-it-yourself project that extends your life beyond the parenting role. Overextended parents do no favors to the family if they are stretched so thin that no one finds home to be a restful, fun place. Never underestimate the power of a family member or a good babysitter when you need to feel revived.



### *Reward Yourself*

Since no one is likely to give you an award for the fine job you did today, learn to affirm yourself. It's second nature to dwell on weaknesses and shortcomings, but it is possible to train the brain to follow a different path. Positive self-talk is powerful and can become a habit. "I think I handled that well." "Wow, I kept my cool today." "I followed through on what I said I would do." "I enjoyed the moment."